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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000432

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER PINS IZ

SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: IRAQI POLICE RECRUITMENT ON TARGET, BUT STAFF AND EQUIPMENT CHALLENGES PERSIST

Classified By: PRT Leader Rick Bell for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Salah ad Din reporting cable.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY: The Iraqi Police (IP) force in Salah ad Din (SaD) continues to meet its targets for recruitment and training, but faces several challenges that could limit its effectiveness. With the number of recruits scheduled to graduate basic training in 2009, the province will exceed 100 percent of its training goals. However, most of the senior IP officers in SAD do not have permanent hiring orders, which leaves them open to potential immediate dismissal. The lack of permanent orders for the officers is largely due to their having been members in the Ba'ath party under Saddam. These officers feel that they are working under an umbrella of suspicion, and fear they will eventually be fired by the Ministry of the Interior (MOI). SaD IPs also complain about a lack of funding for equipment and weapons training. END SUMMARY.

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SUFFICIENT RECRUITMENT LEVELS  
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¶3. (C) SaD IP recruiting efforts continue to proceed smoothly. The province's IP force currently has over 16,000 personnel out of a total authorized number of 18,000. The SaD Transition Integration Program (TIP) academy graduated 388 students from its Basic Recruit Training (BRT) on December 18, and another 390 students on January 22, which brought the province up to a 100 percent trained level for its police. The recruits come from various backgrounds, including Sons of Iraq units in SaD. However, some of these are not present for duty: approximately 1,400 are still on the books but are either retired or dead.

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LACK OF PERMANENT HIRING ORDERS COULD CRIPPLE FORCE  
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¶4. (C) According to the SaD Provincial Director of Police (PDOP), Major General Hamed Al-Namis, the biggest challenge facing the SaD IP force right now is the uncertain status of 1,300 police officers who have not been issued permanent hiring orders. The 1,300 are all officers, comprising approximately 75 percent of the SaD IP officer corps (including the PDOP). Without permanent orders, MOI can discharge them at any time--a move that would cripple IP efforts in the province. Besides the negative effects on the morale of the force, the lack of orders also means that officers individually have no retirement benefits, and no compensation for injuries or death suffered in the line of duty.

¶5. (C) The uncertainty surrounding the status of the 1,300 officers can be traced back to May 2008 when the MoI issued a memo disqualifying them from service. The most common reason for disqualification is membership in the Ba'ath Party under the old regime. Despite the memo's statement that payments for the 1,300 would stop at that time, the MoI has continued

to pay them. SaD IP officials have chosen not to push the issue, in hopes that the political changes following the elections this year will result in more favorable treatment from MoI.

¶6. (C) The staff at the TIP Academy remain helpful to Coalition Forces (CF), but this is a fragile union due to the hiring-order issues. Currently there are 27 officers (including the dean of the academy), 11 policemen (shurta) and one civilian employee at the academy without hiring orders. The loss of them would greatly harm the academy's ability to accomplish its mission. Some of the academy staff believe that it was the CF, not the MoI, that prevented the issuance of permanent hiring orders, and that CF could address this if it wished.

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INADEQUATE FUNDING FOR WEAPONS AND TRAINING

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¶7. (C) Despite strong recruitment, the PDOP has told the PRT that the force has inadequate funding for weapons training and equipment: according to the PDOP, there is no ammunition for training and no shooting range. The force is short on weapons and able to equip only 60 percent of its members. SaD IPs manage this shortage by sharing weapons between shifts. There is also a shortage of armored vehicles, which the IP lacks money to buy. The PDOP also said the force needs more funding to hire specialized employees such as surveyors and engineers.

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